

18-th meeting of the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment under the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention)

(17-18 October 2023, Geneva)

Statement by Ukraine

After the adoption of the agenda of the meeting

Dear Chair,

Distinguished delegates,

Thank you for giving me the floor. I'm taking it now before we'll start the discussion on substantial issues, because what I would like to highlight is now related to each of the agenda items of this meeting and many other international meetings in the field of environment as well as in other fields of international cooperation.

On the past few weeks many terrible things happened. The whole world has seen horrific footage from the terrorist attack on Israel.

We in Ukraine are particularly sensitive to what has happened. We have been facing the cruelty of terror, which was brought to the streets of Ukrainian cities and villages.

Today is six hundred and first day of full-scale unprovoked and unjustified Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. It is ongoing, causing significant human casualties among civilians as well as huge environmental disasters again and again.

Hostilities are the cause of pollution of surface and groundwater. Excess concentrations of mercury, copper, zinc, manganese in the Dniester, Dnipro and Seversky Donets rivers have been recorded.

Heavy metals, petroleum products, toxic and dangerous compounds pollute water as a result of explosions, missile strikes, accidents and fires at oil depots, caused by the aggressor-state.

In terms of water pollution: petroleum products and other hazardous substances that were uptaken by the water have a negative impact on aquatic biotopes. When an oil film appears on the water surface, it causes death to the benthic and pelagic hydrobionts in the larval stages of development.

Another abhorrent Russian terrorist attack of June, 6, 2023 – the blowing up of the Kakhovka dam – is one of the biggest environmental disaster Europe has seen in the last few decades and it should be a turning point of how the world recognizes ecocide.

The destruction of the Kakhovka dam, which has now dried up, is threatening 2.9 million hectares of the Emerald Network. These are nature conservation territories of considerable ecological value, which serve as habitats for the internationally important aquatic species.

Concerning the impact on the marine environment: oil products and hazardous substances could enter the Black Sea areas that belong to the other countries. An intensive and deep quality control of the water will be required to predict possible impact on the marine environment.

A change in salinity in the Dnipro-Buh estuary to the level of 0.2 ‰ will lead to changes in the ecosystems of the estuary and the sea.

The damage to the water resources of Ukraine from Russian aggression today reaches more than \$2.5 billion.

Thus, we reiterate that Russia's invasion of Ukraine resulted, among other things, in almost 2,500 cases of environmental damage have already been recorded, with the Office of the Prosecutor General investigating nearly 200 cases of ecological war crimes.

While Ukraine reaffirms its commitments to the implementation of the Water Convention, we would like to stress that our priority to protect the environment should be the restoration of peace in the region, which would be possible only when Russia withdraws its troops from the territory of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders.

Dear Chair,

We encourage the international conventional bodies to contribute to the implementation of the Peace Formula of President Zelenskyy in order to ensure environmental security and address the environmental causes of Russia's war.

We would like this statement to be included in the report of the meeting.

Thank you.